



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement in Regard to Russian Actions on Georgian and Moldovan Separatist Conflicts**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 1, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At the Permanent Council session on February 15<sup>th</sup>, Armenia opened a stimulating debate on the proposed GUAM resolution on unresolved separatist conflicts. My country responded to that intervention through the message of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

During that debate, however, the Russian Federation took the opportunity to comment as well on those conflicts not covered by the Minsk Group. The United States would like to reiterate its position that the separatist conflicts in the Transnistrian region of Moldova, and the South Ossetian and Abkhazia regions of Georgia, should be resolved peacefully and with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova and Georgia within their internationally recognized borders.

The Russian Federation has said that it shares this view, a statement we have welcomed. Thus we are concerned by recent Russian actions, which seem to contradict that approach. These include:

- Welcoming Eduard Kokoity in Moscow last month as the “President of South Ossetia”;
- Diverting assistance for South Ossetia directly to separatist leaders instead of joining the rest of the international community in funding economic rehabilitation projects through the OSCE; and
- Establishing infrastructure links directly between North and South Ossetia, including a gas pipeline and infrastructure for television and telecommunications.

Similarly, on Moldova’s Transnistria region, on February 20, Foreign Minister Lavrov received Transnistrian separatist leader Igor Smirnov, whom the Foreign Ministry referred to as, The “President of Transnistria”.

This was an echo of an earlier Russian Foreign Ministry statement reporting on a January 30 meeting at the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister level with Valery Litskai, whom they referred to

as the Transnistrian “Foreign Minister”. The Russian Foreign Ministry press statements convey de facto recognition of Messrs. Smirnov and Litskai as recognized officials of a sovereign state - not a separatist regime.

Our concerns were amplified two weeks ago, when the Five-Plus-Two negotiations on Transnistria failed to resume, yet again, as called for by the mediators and observers following their January 25<sup>th</sup> consultations in Madrid - and despite the fact that Russia is a mediator in the Five-Plus-Two talks.

The United States regrets that peaceful negotiations with the participation of all parties in the established format have been suspended for nearly a year. The government of the Republic of Moldova accepted the invitation to resume the talks, but the authorities of the Transnistrian region did not even reply. It is lamentable that there was no consensus among the mediators to follow up on the invitation; nor did there appear to be any effort by the Russian Federation to use its influence with the authorities in Tiraspol to bring them back to the negotiating table.

In Madrid and Odesa recently, the Russian Federation reiterated its support for a solution respecting Moldova’s territorial integrity. This is a very welcome statement of principle. Yet Russia’s support to the Transnistrian separatist regime that I have just outlined appears to contradict the united approach that the mediators and observers should be taking. It raises questions about Russia’s commitment to the principle of Moldova’s national sovereignty.

We would welcome an explanation from the Russian Federation as to how it can reconcile what appear to be clear actions in support of the separatist regimes in Georgia and Moldova with its stated policy of respect for the territorial integrity of these two OSCE participating States and commitment to peaceful settlement of the disputes. We hope Russia might offer such an explanation in the spirit of working with OSCE partners to find ways to make progress to resolve these conflicts. We need to build bridges between the sides if we are to achieve a permanent resolution of these conflicts. We need to use our influence to encourage them to engage in negotiations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.